

# The cleansing of the temple in early medieval Northumbria

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## ABSTRACT

While the attitudes of Stephen of Ripon and Bede toward church-buildings have previously been contrasted, this paper argues that both shared a vision of the church as a holy place, analogous to the Jewish temple and to be kept pure from the mundane world. Their similarity of approach suggests that this concept of the church-building was widespread amongst the Northumbrian monastic elite and may partially reflect the attitudes of the laity also. The idea of the church as the place of eucharistic sacrifice probably lay at the heart of this theology of sacred place. Irish ideas about monastic holiness, traditional liturgical language and the native fascination with building in stone combined with an interest in ritual purity to give power to this use of the temple-image which went on to influence later Carolingian attitudes to churches.

Ecclesiastical and spiritual life in early eighth-century Northumbria is often understood in terms of division and disagreement, a stark contrast frequently being seen to have separated the ideas of the Wilfridian party from those of their opponents. Very real differences undoubtedly existed concerning issues such as monasticism and the episcopate, the nature of sanctity and the difficult question of how to deal with the Northumbrian Church's Columban past.<sup>1</sup> But equally real similarities united the various ecclesiastical parties, who did after all share the same societal and religious context. This paper examines the issue of sacred place and in particular that of the sanctity of churches. Theories of sacred space have been a topic of great interest to scholars for many years and increasingly medievalists have made

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<sup>1</sup> C. Stancliffe, 'Disputed episcopacy: Bede, Acca and the relationship between Stephen's *Life of Wilfrid* and the early prose Lives of St Cuthbert', *ASE* 41 (2012), 7–39, at 30–1 and 37–8; S. Coates, 'The Role of Bishops in the Early Anglo-Saxon Church: A Reassessment', *History* 81 (1996), 177–96, at 190–3; W. T. Foley, *Images of Sanctity in Eddius Stephanus' Life of Bishop Wilfrid, an Early English Saint's Life* (Lampeter, 1992), pp. 108–25. For the avoidance of ambiguity, in this paper I use a capital letter c for the institution (e.g. 'the Northumbrian Church') and a small letter c when referring to a physical church (whether specific or general).

important contributions to the history of holy places.<sup>2</sup> Stephen of Ripon and Bede (frequently taken as representatives of different parties within the Northumbrian Church)<sup>3</sup> have often had their attitudes to church-buildings contrasted with each other; however, examination will prove that they were broadly in agreement about how churches ought to be treated. This in turn suggests that Bede and Stephen reflected ideas general within the Northumbria of their time, certainly amongst the clergy and religious, and possibly even the laity also.

Churches were sacred spots, to be set apart from the common world around them and treated with special respect: they, in fact, were analogous to the Jewish temple itself. The image of the temple formed a major theme throughout Bede's corpus of course, one which I have examined in detail elsewhere.<sup>4</sup> The relationship between the temple and the church-building constitutes only a minor element in his overall work but one which can help to throw significant light on the importance of sacred places in contemporary Northumbrian society. Reading Bede and Stephen together we can see how the Northumbrian clerical elite shared similar, though not always identical, attitudes to physical churches. This elite should not, of course, be taken to speak for all of their society. But in the comparative silence of the early Middle Ages the faint voices of Stephen and Bede may give us some idea of how Northumbrian worshippers viewed holy places, the buildings in which they gathered, prayed and (too often for their clerics' liking) gossiped, argued and laughed.

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<sup>2</sup> E.g. M. Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane*, trans. W. R. Trask (Orlando, FL, 1959), pp. 20–65; M. Cassidy-Welch, *Monastic Spaces and their Meanings: Thirteenth-Century English Cistercian Monasteries* (Turnhout, 2001); D. Marie Hayes, *Body and Sacred Place in Medieval Europe, 1100-1389* (New York, 2003); S. Hamilton and A. Spicer, 'Defining the Holy: the Delineation of Sacred Space', *Defining the Holy: Sacred Space in Medieval and Early Modern Europe*, ed. A. Spicer and S. Hamilton (Aldershot, 2005), pp. 1–23; H. Gittos, *Liturgy, Architecture, and Sacred Places in Anglo-Saxon England* (Oxford, 2013).

<sup>3</sup> Bede's attitude to Wilfrid has occasioned much discussion for decades. The papers in N.J. Higham (ed.), *Wilfrid: Abbot, Bishop, Saint; Papers from the 1300<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Conferences* (Donington, 2013), make clear that whatever Bede's reservations about the bishop he cannot be bluntly described as 'anti-Wilfrid'.

<sup>4</sup> C. O'Brien, *Bede's Temple: An Image and its Interpretation* (Oxford, 2015).

According to Stephen of Ripon, when Wilfrid discovered the dirty and decrepit state of the church at York he saw that ‘the house of God and the house of prayer had become like a den of thieves; so, forthwith, in accordance with the will of God, he made a plan to restore it’.<sup>5</sup> Filled with Christ-like zeal, the young bishop set about literally cleaning-up the old stone church. This analogy between Wilfrid’s work at York and Christ’s cleansing of the temple chimes with Stephen’s use of the temple-image when praising Wilfrid’s construction of churches elsewhere in his *vita*: Stephen compared Wilfrid’s work on the church of Ripon to that of Moses on the tabernacle and Solomon on the temple.<sup>6</sup> For the hagiographer the temple-image here primarily glorified the bishop’s work in building churches; this was an unambiguously good activity, stimulating the faith of the people of Northumbria as the latest in a long line of divinely-inspired construction work. Laynesmith has persuasively argued that Stephen probably wrote with spiritual, as well as material, edification in mind;<sup>7</sup> nonetheless, many scholars have felt that Bede would not have approved of the link between the temple and physical church-buildings.<sup>8</sup> However, if we turn to his exegesis of the cleansing of the temple we see that Bede actually made that very connection himself.

Bede’s lengthiest Gospel commentary is that on Luke, in which Bede borrowed his interpretation of the cleansing account (Luke XIX.45–7) from Gregory the Great. Bede explained the allegorical meaning of the story in a long, verbatim quotation from Gregory’s *Homiliae in euangelia*, offering a two-fold interpretation. On one level, the story symbolised the corruption of those who ‘while they gain the rank of holy orders, bestow the service of

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<sup>5</sup> Stephen, *Vita sancti Wilfridi* [hereafter: *VW*], ch. XVI, ed. and trans B. Colgrave, *The Life of Bishop Wilfrid by Eddius Stephanus* (Cambridge, 1927), p. 34: ‘... quod domus Dei et orationis quasi speluncam latronum factam agnovit, et mox iuxta voluntatem Dei emendare excogitavit.’

<sup>6</sup> Stephen, *VW*, ch. XVII (ed. Colgrave, pp. 34–6).

<sup>7</sup> M. D. Laynesmith, ‘Stephen of Ripon and the Bible: allegorical and typological interpretations of the *Life of St Wilfrid*’, *EME* 9 (2000), 163–82, at 172–4.

<sup>8</sup> A. G. Holder, ‘Allegory and History in Bede’s Interpretation of Sacred Architecture’, *Amer. Benedictine Rev.* 40 (1989), 115–31, at 123; J. O’Reilly, ‘Introduction’, *Bede: On the Temple*, trans. S. Connolly (Liverpool, 1995), pp. xvii–lv, at xlix–l; Stancliffe, ‘Disputed episcopacy’, p. 31.

holy religion according to the commerce of earthly business'.<sup>9</sup> Gregory had frequently interpreted the cleansing of the temple with reference to clerical corruption in this way, using it to condemn simony especially.<sup>10</sup> But the temple was also 'the mind and conscience of the faithful, which, if it produces wicked thoughts harmful to a neighbour, is like when thieves dwell in a den'.<sup>11</sup> This approach to the story in terms of clerical or individual wickedness was thoroughly traditional in patristic exegesis.<sup>12</sup>

Many years after completing his commentary on Luke, Bede produced one on Mark's Gospel (where the story of the cleansing of the temple appears at Mark XI.15–17). In this work he repeated part of his quotation from Gregory, reusing the moral, interior reading of the temple as the mind.<sup>13</sup> He also made the point about clerical corruption again – although this time using a different quotation from Gregory which argued that selling doves symbolised selling the grace of the Holy Spirit. Once again this was a thoroughly traditional interpretation, one put forward by all of the major Latin Fathers.<sup>14</sup> But Bede also said something here which he had not discussed in *On Luke*. He pointed out that Christ had prevented the sale of items for sacrifice in the temple – a practice which would have been acceptable elsewhere; and 'if the Lord did not wish to be sold in the temple those things which he wished to be offered in the temple ... with how much censure do you think he would have punished if he had found

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<sup>9</sup> Bede, *In Lucae euangelium expositio* [hereafter: *Luc.*] v lines 2129–33, ed. D. Hurst, CCSL 120 (Turnhout, 1960), 349: '... dum sacrorum ordinum locum percipiunt sanctae religionis officium in commercium terrenae negotiationis tribuunt.' = Gregory, *Homiliae in euangelia* xxix. 6, ed. R. Étaix, CCSL 141, 386. My translation.

<sup>10</sup> E. Bain, 'Les marchands chassés du Temple, entre commentaires et usages sociaux', *Médiévales* 55 (2008), 53–74, at 55–6.

<sup>11</sup> Bede, *Luc.* v lines 2143–7 (ed. Hurst, p. 349): 'Templum quoque et domus Dei est ipsa mens atque conscientia fidelium, quae si quando in laesione proximi peruersas cogitationes profert, quasi in spelunca latrones resident' = Gregory, *In Euangelia* xxxix.7 (ed. Étaix, p. 386). My translation.

<sup>12</sup> For example Jerome, *Commentarii in Matheum*, ed. D. Hurst & M. Adriaen, CCSL 77 (Turnhout, 1969), 188, also made use of both interpretations.

<sup>13</sup> Bede, *In Marci euangelium expositio* [hereafter: *Marc.*] iii lines 1486–90, ed. D. Hurst, CCSL 120 (Turnhout, 1960), 580: text as in note 11 above.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.* iii lines 1451–62 (ed. Hurst, p. 579) = Gregory, *In euangelia* xvii. 13 (ed. Étaix, p. 127). Cf. Ambrose, *Expositio euangelii secundum Lucam* ix. 19, ed. M. Adriaen, CCSL 14 (Turnhout, 1957), 338; Augustine, *Tractatus in Iohannis euangelium* x. 6, ed. R. Willems, CCSL 36 (Turnhout, 1954), 104; Jerome, *In Matheum*, p. 188. All these works were known to Bede.

anybody wasting time with laughter or gossip ... in the shrines consecrated to God'.<sup>15</sup> In other words, Bede interpreted the cleansing of the temple as commenting upon the forms of behaviour appropriate in church-buildings.<sup>16</sup> Only a little earlier in the text, he had made the same link between the temple and contemporary churches. Upon entering Jerusalem Jesus had gone straight to the temple (Mark XI.11) and Bede drew from this the moral that when 'we happen to reach a village or town or any place whatever in which a house of prayer consecrated to God might be, we ought firstly to turn aside to that [church], and after we have commended ourselves to the Lord through the pursuit of prayer, then we can withdraw in order to do the earthly business for which we came'.<sup>17</sup>

This approach to the cleansing of the temple in the commentary on Mark was very similar to that which Bede followed in his homily on John's account of the story (John II.14–22). There too the individual was warned not to have wicked thoughts; there too the condemnation of the merchants was understood as referring to clerical corruption.<sup>18</sup> And, there once more, Bede stated that if Christ was so angry at the sale of items for sacrifice to God in the temple, how much more angry would he have been with people gossiping, quarrelling and laughing? He concluded: 'I have said this with reference to those who enter a church, and not only disregard their intention to pray, but also increase the things for which they should have been praying ...'<sup>19</sup> Once again we find Bede making a direct link with church-buildings and the

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<sup>15</sup> Bede, *Marc.* iii lines 1440–9 (ed. Hurst, pp. 578–9): 'Si ergo dominus nec ea uolebat in templo uenundari quae in templo uolebat offerri ... quanta putas animaduersione puniret si inuenisset aliquos ibi risui uel uaniloquio ... in aedibus Deo sacratis aguntur?' My translation.

<sup>16</sup> The phrase 'in aedibus Deo sacratis' finds a close match in Bede's *Life of Felix* in a passage also referring to a church-building. Bede, *Beati Felicis confessoris vita*, PL 94, col. 796: 'sacris ... ab aedibus'.

<sup>17</sup> Bede, *Marc.* iii lines 1296–1303 (ed. Hurst, p. 575): '... ut cum forte uillam aut oppidum aut alium quemlibet locum in quo sit domus orationis Deo consecrata intramus primo ad hanc divertamus et postquam nos domino per orationum studia commendauerimus sic deinde ad agenda ea propter quae uenimus temporalia negotia secedamus.' My translation.

<sup>18</sup> Bede, *Homiliarum euangelii libri II* [hereafter: *Hom.*] ii. 1, ed. D. Hurst, CCSL 122 (Turnhout, 1955), 186–7.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.* (ed. Hurst, p. 185): 'Haec propter illos diximus qui ecclesiam ingressi non solum intentionem orandi neglegunt uerum etiam ea pro quibus orare debuerant augent ...'; trans. L. T. Martin and D. Hurst, *Bede: Homilies on the Gospels*, 2 vols. (Kalamazoo, MI, 1991) II, 3.

correct way to behave within them. This is not an interpretation which Bede simply cut and paste out of Gregory's homilies. It is one he developed for himself.<sup>20</sup>

Which is not to say that Bede did not have sources here. The homily on John allows us to see that he had drawn upon Augustine's tenth tractate on John. Augustine made the same point as Bede: that the traders in the temple were actually selling things necessary for the worship of God, but that such an action, acceptable elsewhere, was banned from the temple. What then would Christ think of people doing wicked things in such a place? Augustine specifically attacked drunkenness and we have to see this tractate as part of his preaching against the common Late Antique practice of feasting and drinking in honour of the martyrs at churches and cemeteries – a practice which he tried hard to stamp out.<sup>21</sup> Bede had taken Augustine as inspiration and developed the argument beyond the bishop of Hippo's immediate focus. Both urged their audience to imitate Christ's zeal for the Father's house by seeking to correct other members of the Church. In particular, Augustine said one should seek to prevent those 'you see rushing and wishing to get drunk, and wishing to do this, something which is proper nowhere, in the holy places'.<sup>22</sup> Bede encouraged the listeners to ensure that 'nothing unsuitable ... should happen in the house of prayer where the body of the Lord is consecrated, and where there can be no doubt that the presence of angels is always near.'<sup>23</sup> Clearly, for Bede the issue extended far beyond simply drinking in a church.

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<sup>20</sup> See Bain, 'Les marchands chassés du Temple', pp. 56–9 – a discussion to which I am very much indebted.

<sup>21</sup> Augustine, *Tractatus* x. 4 (ed. Willems, p. 102). Augustine himself wrote explaining his use of the story of the cleansing of the temple as part of his campaign against such activities: *Epistulae* xxix. 3–4, ed. A. Goldbacher, CSEL 34 (Vienna, 1895–8), 115–6. Bede would also have been familiar with these practices from Paulinus Nolanus, *Carmina* xxvii lines 542–95, ed. W. de Hartel, CSEL 30, 286–8; Paulinus took a somewhat more understanding attitude than Augustine did, but still emphasized that 'sancta precum domus est ecclesia' (ed. de Hartel, p. 287) in which drinking has no place.

<sup>22</sup> Augustine, *Tractatus* x. 9 (ed. Willems, p. 106): 'Vides alios currere et inebriari uelle, et hoc uelle in locis sanctis, quod nusquam decet? prohibe quos potes ...' My translation.

<sup>23</sup> Bede, *Hom.* ii. 1 (ed. Hurst, p. 188): 'maxime domum orationis ubi corpus domini consecratur ubi angelorum praesentia semper adesse non dubitatur ne quid ineptum fiat ... totis uiribus agamus.'; adapted from trans. Martin and Hurst, *Homilies* II, 7.

How can we explain Bede's different approach to the story of the cleansing of the temple in different works? It seems likely that the commentary on Luke was the earliest of these works: we know it dates from roughly 710–15, between the ascension of Bede's patron Acca to the see of Hexham and the beginning of the commentary on the first Book of Samuel which Bede had well in hand in June 716. Bede wrote *On Luke* under some pressure from Acca, having initially been unwilling to undertake so vast a labour.<sup>24</sup> The work is indeed one of Bede's longest and this fact, combined with a very self-conscious emphasis on his debt to the Fathers, explains probably why so much of it consists of quotation from patristic sources.<sup>25</sup> In such a context it is not surprising that when Bede came to Luke's account of the cleansing he simply looked around for some appropriate patristic comment on this text, and having found it, imported it into his own commentary and moved on. Many years later when writing his commentary on Mark (another heavy labour for which he does not seem to have had much affection), Bede happily repeated himself verbatim on occasion;<sup>26</sup> it is hard, therefore, to find any reason why he would have been unwilling to use the quotation from Gregory in its entirety all over again – unless his *Homilia* ii. 1 had been written in the meantime.

A homily belongs to an entirely different genre from a commentary; its purpose is not simply to pass on the best of orthodox interpretation of any given verse, but to render that interpretation immediate and relevant to the congregation being addressed.<sup>27</sup> We do not know

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<sup>24</sup> See Acca and Bede's exchange: Bede, *Luc.* prol. (ed. Hurst, pp. 5–10). Bede sent his commentary on Acts to Acca while struggling to get to grips with the huge task required in writing *On Luke*: Bede, *Expositio actuum apostolorum*, preface, ed. M. L. W. Laistner, CCSL 121, 3.

<sup>25</sup> For Bede's dependence upon patristic sources in *On Luke*: M. Gorman, 'Source Marks and Chapter Divisions in Bede's Commentary on Luke', *RB* 112 (2002), 246–90.

<sup>26</sup> For the commentary on Mark as being 'many years' later than that on Luke: *Marc.* prol. lines 48–9 (ed. Hurst, p. 432): 'in expositione euangelii beati Lucae quam ante annos plurimos auxiliante Dei gratia composuimus'. The critical apparatus in CCSL 120 reveals just how much of the commentary on Mark repeats material from that on Luke.

<sup>27</sup> See E. J. Del Giacco, 'Exegesis and Sermon: A Comparison of Bede's Commentary and Homilies on Luke', *Med. Sermon Stud.* 50 (2006), 9–29; L. T. Martin, 'The Two Worlds in Bede's Homilies: The Biblical Event and the Listeners' Experience', *De ore Domini: Preacher and Word in the Middle Ages*, ed. T. L. Amos, E. A. Green and B. M. Kienzel (Kalamazoo, MI, 1989), pp. 27–40; A.G.P. van der Walt, 'The Homiliary of the Venerable Bede and Early Medieval Preaching' (unpubl. PhD. thesis, London Univ., 1980), pp. 215–18.

if Bede's homilies were ever actually delivered or whether they were purely literary exercises;<sup>28</sup> but in either case the importance of speaking on a direct moral level to the (real or imagined) audience would have been paramount. It seems plausible that this kind of situation could have caused Bede to reflect upon the story of Christ's anger in the temple and to see how it might be made relevant to the lives of the congregation listening to a homily in a church. Augustine's use of the story in a similar preaching situation would have helped Bede to see the possible link he could draw between the church-building and the temple. This homily was thus, I would argue, composed sometime between the commentaries on Luke and Mark – possibly in the decade between 715 and 725. Later when Bede came to write about Mark's gospel he combined the approaches he had taken in his two earlier interpretations of the cleansing, those in the commentary on Luke and *Homilia* ii. 1.

The importance of this (admittedly imagined) reconstruction is that for Bede, when thinking about what would make sense to a Northumbrian congregation in a Northumbrian church, the link between the temple and the church-building sprang to mind. His and Stephen's uses of the image display similar concerns about the dignity of the church-building and how it ought to be treated. They both saw the church as a place consecrated to God and therefore demanding respect in a fashion similar to the temple. One wishing to emphasize the difference between them could argue that while Bede was concerned with behaviour (how Christians ought to act), Stephen was concerned with the material condition of the building (the need for windows to be glazed and the mess of birds which had entered the church removed). But such an argument seems unconvincing however, unless one believes that Bede, unwilling to accept laughter in a church, would have countenanced bird excrement. Both authors shared a common attitude to church-buildings, which in turn suggests

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<sup>28</sup> L. T. Martin, 'Bede and preaching', *The Cambridge Companion to Bede*, ed. S. DeGregorio (Cambridge, 2010), pp. 156–69, at 162–3.



something about how churches were seen in early Christian Northumbria, at least by the clerical elite.

Why did these two Northumbrian monks describe the church in such terms? The key to Bede's thought may appear in his comment on not letting anything inappropriate happen 'in the house of prayer where the body of the Lord is consecrated'.<sup>29</sup> The temple was a place of sacrifice and so too was the church. Bede clearly saw the eucharistic offering as a sacrifice which the congregation offered up: '*Let us immolate anew to God the most holy body and precious blood of our Lamb, by which we have been redeemed from our sins.*'<sup>30</sup> The church-building was thus a type of temple, analogous to that in Jerusalem: 'If [Christ] chose to walk in the temple, where the flesh and blood of brute animals used to be offered, much more will he rejoice to visit our house of prayer, where the sacrament of his own body and blood is celebrated.'<sup>31</sup> Bede made a link between the temple and the contemporary location of the eucharistic altar a number of times in his homilies. Christ, having been circumcised, went to the temple to give sacrifice, which was a 'prefiguration of any of the faithful entering from the baptistery to the holy altar and needing to be consecrated by the exceptional sacrificial victim of the Lord's body and blood.'<sup>32</sup> This interpretation, which clearly focuses on the

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<sup>29</sup> Bede, *Hom.* ii. 1 (ed. Hurst, p. 188): note 23 above. For the importance of the eucharist in the process by which churches come to be seen as holy places: D. Iogna-Prat, *La Maison Dieu: une histoire monumentale de l'Église au Moyen Âge (v.800-v.1200)* (Paris, 2006), pp. 450–9. For Bede's thought on the eucharist: M. T. A. Carroll, *The Venerable Bede: His Spiritual Teachings* (Washington, DC, 1946), pp. 107–31.

<sup>30</sup> Bede, *Hom.* ii. 7 (ed. Hurst, p. 231): '*corpus sacrosanctum et pretiosum agni nostri sanguinem quo a peccatis redempti sumus denuo Deo in profectum nostrae salutis immolamus.*'; trans. Martin and Hurst, *Homilies* II, 67 (my emphasis).

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.* ii. 24 (ed. Hurst, p. 358): '*Si ergo ambulare uoluit in templo in quo caro et sanguis brutorum animalium offerebatur, multo magis nostram orationis domum ubi carnis ipsius ac sanguinis sacramenta celebrantur uisitare gaudebit.*'; trans. Martin and Hurst, *Homilies* II, 241–2.

<sup>32</sup> *Hom.* i. 14 (ed. Hurst, pp. 101–2): '*... in inductione in templum et oblatione hostiae purificantis figuratum cognoscis fideles quosque de baptisterio ad altare sanctum ingredi ac dominici corporis et sanguinis uictima singulari debere consecrari ...*'; adapted from trans. Martin and Hurst, *Homilies* II, 143. Bede's use of the word *baptisterium* is interesting considering that almost no archaeological evidence exists of separate baptismal churches in early Anglo-Saxon England: J. Blair, *The Church in Anglo-Saxon Society* (Oxford, 2005), pp. 70 and 201–2. It is possible that baptisms took place in the eastern *porticus* of some early Anglo-Saxon church-buildings, which may explain Bede's phraseology: P. S. Barnwell, *The Place of Baptism in Anglo-Saxon and Norman Churches* (Deerhurst, 2014), pp. 4–11.

physical locations of the sacraments, was one which Bede put forward again elsewhere.<sup>33</sup> He condemned the wickedness of the Jews who came to the temple to be cleansed, but plotted there the murder of Christ: the message on this occasion being that one ought not to approach the altar to participate in the eucharist when filled with hatred towards other members of Christ – to do so turned the house of prayer into a den of thieves.<sup>34</sup>

Bede could understand the temple as standing for the altar on which the eucharist was offered; but we also see a much more general link between the temple and the church-building frequently appearing in his homilies. For example, the man cured by Christ on the Sabbath did not recognize his healer in the crowd, but in the temple (John V.12–15); for Bede the message was that we ought to flee the wicked crowd and ‘take refuge in the house of prayer, where, invoking the Lord in secret liberty, we may both give thanks for the kindnesses we have received from him, and entreat him with humble devotion for those which are yet to be received’.<sup>35</sup> In *Homilia* ii. 15 Bede read the example of the apostles who ‘were continually in the temple, praising and blessing God’ as showing ‘that the Holy Spirit deigns to visit and inhabit only those hearts which he sees are devoted to frequenting the place of prayer and to divine praise and blessing’.<sup>36</sup> In another homily Bede again used the example of the apostles attending the temple to encourage the congregation to attend church at the canonical hours.<sup>37</sup>

This claim that Bede interpreted the biblical temple as referring to a Christian church may at first seem surprising. Arthur Holder has convincingly shown that Bede never applied to

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<sup>33</sup> *Hom.* i. 18 (ed. Hurst, p. 130).

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.* ii. 4 (ed. Hurst, pp. 207–8).

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.* i. 23 (ed. Hurst, p. 165): ‘Confugiamus seduli ad domum orationis ubi secreta libertate dominum inuocantes et de perceptis ab eo beneficiis gratias agamus et de percipiendis humili deuotione precemur ...’; trans. Martin and Hurst, *Homilies* I, 227.

<sup>36</sup> *Hom.* ii. 15 (ed. Hurst, pp. 284–5): ‘... erant semper in templo laudantes et benedicentes Deum scientes certissime quia illa solummodo corda spiritus sanctus inuisere et inhabitare dignatur quae locum orationis frequentantia quae laudi et benedictioni diuinae uiderit esse dedita.’; trans. Martin and Hurst II, 141.

<sup>37</sup> *Hom.* ii. 16 (ed. Hurst, p. 300).

church-buildings the type of allegorical analysis which he frequently used on the image of the Jewish temple; non-biblical holy sites could not be read for their spiritual meaning in the same way as those described in the Bible could.<sup>38</sup> This has been interpreted as a ‘refusal’ to see symbolic importance in contemporary buildings, reflective of Bede’s preference for the spiritual over the material.<sup>39</sup> But this could only be the case if there had been a tradition in the Latin West at that time of allegorising churches by which Bede could ‘refuse’ to be seduced. Eusebius’ interpretation of the church at Tyre provides the major ancient example of such an approach, but since this was not included in Rufinus’ Latin translation of the *Ecclesiastical History*, Bede was certainly entirely unaware of it.<sup>40</sup> As Holder has pointed out, Adomnán of Iona’s *De locis sanctis*, which circulated in early medieval Northumbria, did draw a link between the lamps over the Holy Sepulchre and the number of the apostles which Bede subsequently dropped from his own version of *De locis sanctis*.<sup>41</sup> The only such comment in Adomnán’s work, this could hardly be argued to have presented a model of allegorising church-buildings for Bede to reject. Furthermore, recent work on the relationship between Bede and Adomnán’s texts suggests that the Northumbrian had no intention of replacing the

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<sup>38</sup> Holder, ‘Allegory and History’; G. H. Brown, ‘The Church as Non-Symbol in the Age of Bede’, *Northumbria’s Golden Age*, ed. J. Hawkes and S. Mills (Stroud, 1999), pp. 359–64. C. B. Kendall, *The Allegory of the Church: Romanesque Portals and Their Verse Inscriptions* (Toronto, 1998), p. 12, argues that the *templum Domini* which Bede subjects to a fourfold exegesis at *De schematibus et tropis* i. 11, ed. C. B. Kendall, CCSL 123 (Turnhout, 1975), 168–9, refers to the church-building – in fact nothing in the text gives cause to think that this (rather than the phrase as used in scripture) was what Bede had in mind.

<sup>39</sup> Holder, ‘Allegory and History’, p. 131.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.* p. 121; S. W. Collins, *The Carolingian Debate over Sacred Space* (New York, 2012), pp. 20–1. Brown, ‘Church as Non-Symbol’, p. 362, is mistaken on this point.

<sup>41</sup> Bede, *Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum* [hereafter *HE*] v. 15, in *Bede’s Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, ed. B. Colgrave and R. A. B. Mynors, rev. ed. (Oxford, 1991), pp. 506–9; Adomnán, *De locis sanctis* i. 2.12, ed. L. Bieler, CCSL 175 (Turnhout, 1965), 188: ‘In quo utique sepulchro dudenae lampades iuxta numerum duodecim sanctorum apostolorum semper die ac nocte ardentes lucent’; Bede, *De locis sanctis* ii. 2, ed. J. Fraipont, in the same volume, p. 255: ‘die noctuque XII lampades ardent’. Holder, ‘Allegory and History’, p. 127.

work of the abbot of Iona – rather his abridged *De locis sanctis* was meant to serve as a preliminary work for students who could then move on to the longer version.<sup>42</sup>

Perhaps more significant than the example of Adomnán is that of Paulinus of Nola whose comments on the churches he himself built certainly do apply an allegorical reading to architecture. The three doors of a church were related to the *sacramentum* of the trinity; Paulinus's church-complex had many roofs because the Church formed a single body composed of many members;<sup>43</sup> the actual work of constructing a church provided an example of how Paulinus' congregation ought to prepare and shape themselves so that Christ might dwell within them.<sup>44</sup> Bede certainly had read these examples where Paulinus applied the methods of understanding the Bible to the world around him, and neither they nor the elaborate descriptions of the churches at Nola find their way into Bede's version of Paulinus' *Vita Felicis*.<sup>45</sup> There is more than one possible explanation as to why this might be, of course; the details of specific churches in Nola may have seemed unimportant in an Anglo-Saxon context. Most importantly, these few examples notwithstanding, Bede was still very much in the mainstream of Christian writing on this subject – allegorical interpretations of the church and liturgy in Latin only became common long after he was dead.<sup>46</sup>

However, that Bede did not allegorise church-buildings certainly does not prove that he saw them as being bereft of any sacred qualities. Indeed, wondering whether Bede applied allegory to churches muddies the waters somewhat – it might be more helpful to investigate

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<sup>42</sup> T. O'Loughlin, *Adomnán and the Holy Places: The Perceptions of an Insular Monk on the Locations of the Biblical Drama* (London, 2007), pp. 188–97.

<sup>43</sup> Paulinus, *Carmina* xxvii lines 455–62 (ed. de Hartel, p. 282).

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.* xxvii lines 279–315 (ed. de Hartel, pp. 303–5).

<sup>45</sup> For Bede's knowledge of this text: N. Wright, 'Imitation of the Poems of Paulinus of Nola in Early Anglo-Latin Verse', *Peritia* 4 (1985), 134–51, at 135; T. W. Mackay, 'A Critical Edition of Bede's *Vita Felicis*' (unpubl. PhD. dissertation, Stanford Univ., 1972), pp. lv–lvi. For Paulinus's use of allegory in these and similar cases: R. P. H. Green, 'Some Types of Imagery in the Poetry of Paulinus of Nola', *Vigiliae Christianae* 27 (1973), 50–2, at 51–2; D. E. Trout, *Paulinus of Nola: Life, Letters, and Poems* (Berkeley, CA, 1999), p. 172.

<sup>46</sup> See discussions in Collins, *Carolingian Debate*, pp. 41–65 and C. Whitehead, *Castles of the Mind: A Study of Medieval Architectural Allegory* (Cardiff, 2003), pp. 49–60.

what he *did* say about churches. They were similar to the Jewish temple and it was that building which could be allegorised as referring to the Christian church: either as a place which ought to be kept pure, or as a place of sacrifice – or both. Similarly Stephen did not read Wilfrid's churches allegorically. Rather he saw church-buildings as being holy sites, analogous to the Jewish temple. Just as God had approved of Moses and Solomon's building works, so too he approved of Wilfrid's action; the saint's piety was established by the concern he showed for the physical dignity of holy places. The focus was not entirely material however: the implication was that Wilfrid's building aimed at increasing the religiosity of the Northumbrians. 'For as Moses built an earthly tabernacle made with hands ... to stir up the faith of the people of Israel for the worship of God, so the blessed Bishop Wilfrid wondrously adorned the bridal chamber of the true Bridegroom and Bride ... in the sight of the multitudes who believed in their hearts and made confession of their faith.'<sup>47</sup> Bede, likewise, explained that David gave all the plans and measurements for the temple to Solomon 'so that, with the state of worship thriving externally, the height of devotion might also increase internally'.<sup>48</sup> Here again the two authors would seem to have broadly agreed.

As Jennifer O'Reilly's work has shown, Bede did display concern about an overly narrow focus upon material construction.<sup>49</sup> He had slighting things to say about people who thought building fine stone basilicas more important than building up the temple-Church of living stones, comparing Gregory the Great favourably with other popes on this point.<sup>50</sup> Cuthbert was a saint who built not gaudy marble churches but a hermitage of wood and hide; in his

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<sup>47</sup> Stephen, *VX*, ch. 17 (ed. Colgrave, p. 34): 'Sicut enim Moyses tabernaculum seculare manu factum ... ad concitandam Israhelitico populo culturae Dei fidem ... ita vero beatissimus Wilfrithus episcopus thalamum veri sponsi et sponsae in conspectu populorum, corde credentium et fide confitentium ... decoravit.' Foley, *Images of Sanctity*, pp. 124–5.

<sup>48</sup> Bede, *Luc.* i lines 86–7 (ed. Hurst, p. 21): 'ut crescente extrinsecus statu culturae etiam deuotionis interius culmen augesceret'. My translation.

<sup>49</sup> J. O'Reilly, 'The Art of Authority', *After Rome*, ed. T. M. Charles-Edwards (Oxford, 2003), pp. 141–89, at 146–7; *eadem*, 'Introduction', pp. xlv–li.

<sup>50</sup> Bede, *HE* ii. 1 (ed. Colgrave and Mynors, p. 128); also Bede, *In Ezram et Neemiam* ii lines 600–4, ed. D. Hurst, CCSL 119A (Turnhout, 1969), 303.

*Vita metrica* of the saint, Bede contrasted the pomp of Solomon's temple with the humility of Cuthbert's hut – the former destined to be destroyed while the latter survived to work miracles.<sup>51</sup> While beginning his dedication homilies by acknowledging his audience's understanding of the church as temple, Bede moved swiftly on to remind them that they (the faithful brought together in worship) were much more truly God's temple.<sup>52</sup> But that was an entirely traditional argument when preaching on such occasions, one which Augustine and Caesarius of Arles had used centuries before.<sup>53</sup> Although he believed that fancy buildings were not more important than Christian souls, Bede maintained a high opinion of church-buildings all the same. He approvingly included in his prose *Vita Felicis* the story of how God destroyed by fire some ugly huts which had blocked Paulinus from expanding and redecorating his magnificent church of Nola; Bede had no sympathy for the inhabitants of these structures, dismissing them as churlish rustics.<sup>54</sup>

One is struck by the fact that, other than the examples from the commentary on Mark's gospel, all the cases where Bede interpreted the temple as the church-building (or part thereof) appear in his homilies. This suggests that they were inspired by the lived experience of Northumbrian congregations gathering in churches, in a manner which Stephen's use of the temple-image to understand Wilfrid's church-building activities may also reflect.<sup>55</sup> A

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<sup>51</sup> Bede, *Vita metrica sancti Cuthberti*, ch. 44, ed. W. Jaeger, *Bedas metrische Vita sancti Cuthberti* (Leipzig, 1935), pp. 127–8. Bede dropped this comparison with the temple from his later accounts of Cuthbert's hermitage, contenting himself with stating that Cuthbert 'coelestis aedificii magis quam terreni decorem quaerebat': Bede, *Vita sancti Cuthberti*, ch. 46, ed. and trans. B. Colgrave, *Two Lives of Saint Cuthbert* (Cambridge, 1940), p. 302. For more on this see O'Brien, *Bede's Temple*, pp. 58–9.

<sup>52</sup> Esp. *Hom.* ii. 24 (ed. Colgrave, p. 359).

<sup>53</sup> Augustine, *Sermones* cccxxxvi–cccxxxvii, PL 38, cols. 1471–8; Caesarius of Arles, *Sermones* ccxxviii–ccxxix, ed. G. Morin, CCSL 104 (Turnhout, 1953), 901–10. D. Iogna-Prat, 'Lieu de culte et exégèse liturgique à l'époque carolingienne', *The Study of the Bible in the Carolingian Era*, ed. C. Chazelle and B. Van Name Edwards (Turnhout, 2003), pp. 215–44, at 222–3; Y. Congar, "'L'Église, ce ne sont pas les murs, mais les Fidèles'", in his *Sacerdoce et Laïcat* (Paris, 1962), pp. 295–303.

<sup>54</sup> Bede, *Vita Felicis*, cols. 796–8 – a more recent critical edition is provided in Mackay, 'Bede's *Vita Felicis*', pp. 27–32; Bede's source was Paulinus, *Carmina* xxviii lines 60–166 (ed. de Hartel, pp. 293–8).

<sup>55</sup> The interpretation of Christ's post-circumcision sacrifice at Bede, *Luc.* i lines 1634–1814 (ed. Hurst, pp. 60–5), lacks any reference to the location of the eucharist of the sort found in Bede, *Hom.* i. 14 and i. 18 (as discussed above: p. 000).

glimpse of the prevalent attitude to churches in early eighth-century Northumbria may be granted us when Bede's homilies on the dedication of a church (usually thought to be St Paul's, Jarrow) begin with the assumption that the congregation already accepted as obvious that the church-building formed a temple of God.<sup>56</sup> We are lucky enough to possess a large corpus of works by Bede and risk therefore attributing a sophistication to his thought which we deny to that of his contemporaries. The fact that a similar depth of material has not survived to flesh out Stephen's comments about church-buildings does not demonstrate that his ideas were shallower than Bede's. Both shared a sense of the physical location's dignity and both may be taken as indicative of a wider attitude within their society. In this respect, we ought to note that neither Bede nor Stephen seems to have thought that the kind of sacrilege which Augustine condemned took place in Northumbria – that Bede dropped Augustine's attack on drunkenness in church-buildings suggests that he considered it irrelevant.

We can perhaps read this difference between Bede and Augustine in two different ways – both potentially valid and helpful. Firstly, one could emphasize the continuity between the two, seeing them both as Christian writers reflecting the same importance of treating churches with respect through pious behaviour. From this perspective the difference between them could have arisen primarily because they were preaching to different audiences. Augustine, engaging in episcopal preaching to his municipal congregation, spoke to a lay audience. Bede's homilies, on the other hand, probably leaned towards the monastic end of the spectrum.<sup>57</sup> He spoke to an audience the majority of which was called to higher and more rigorous forms of behaviour than the laity and one unlikely to engage in the kinds of worldly

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<sup>56</sup> *Hom.* ii. 24 and ii. 25 (ed. Hurst, pp. 358–9 and 368–9).

<sup>57</sup> Walt, 'Homiliary of the Venerable Bede', pp. 258–9 and 263. Del Giacco, 'Exegesis and Sermon', argues for a greater presence of the uneducated laity within Bede's audience than Walt suggests.

activities (drunkenness or sexual sin) with which Augustine had to deal.<sup>58</sup> In this reading there is no necessary contrast between Bede and Augustine – they tailored the same message for different audiences.

Such a reading seems plausible since the writings of Stephen and Bede, of course, only present evidence for how educated participants in monastic culture thought of church-buildings. Both used scripture and exegesis (i.e. their interpretation of the story of the cleansing) to make demands as regards to how churches should be treated and that probably reflects a monastic approach common at this period. I have argued elsewhere that Bede's interest in the temple-image, and in particular his use of it in his homilies with reference to contemporary churches, probably reflects the outlook of the community at Wearmouth-Jarrow – whose pride in their fine stone churches may have outweighed the monk's personal misgivings concerning rich buildings.<sup>59</sup> Similarly, Stephen's praise of the awe-inspiring buildings of Ripon and Hexham came in a work which had been requested by the leaders of those two very communities and presumably reflects something of their own interests.<sup>60</sup> The dramatic stone structures of a Wearmouth or a Ripon, highly unusual at this time, would have made as much of an impact on the mental landscape of Northumbrians as the physical landscape of their kingdom.<sup>61</sup> Vernacular works on Roman architecture provided a possible way of understanding such wonders, with their language concerning 'the work of giants', but religious communities are likely to have drawn upon the Bible and its interpretation to make

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<sup>58</sup> For example, Augustine argued in sermons that sins of the body (presumably sexual sins) were wrong because the body was a temple of God; Bede's homilies never make this direct link between the temple-image and bodily/sexual sin although Bede had clearly read Augustine's argument: Augustine, *Sermones cclxxviii*. 7, col. 1271; Bede, *Excerpts from the Works of Saint Augustine on the Letters of the Blessed Apostle Paul*, trans. D. Hurst (Kalamazoo, MI, 1999), p. 131. It would be naïve, of course, to assume that clergy and religious were immune to drunkenness in church. An early penitential of Welsh origin (ed. L. Bieler, *The Irish Penitentials* (Dublin, 1963), p. 70) begins with the penance required of priests drunk within the church.

<sup>59</sup> O'Brien, *Bede's Temple*, pp. 196–9.

<sup>60</sup> These were Acca of Hexham and Abbot Tatberht of Ripon: Stephen, *VW*, preface (ed. Colgrave, pp. 2–3).

<sup>61</sup> J. Hawkes, 'Iuxta Morem Romanorum: Stone and Sculpture in Anglo-Saxon England', *Anglo-Saxon Styles*, ed. C. E. Karkov and G. H. Brown (Albany, NY, 2003), pp. 69–99, at 71.



sense of such buildings.<sup>62</sup> Stephen's purely rhetorical lack of words to describe Hexham ('my feeble tongue will not permit me to enlarge here upon the depth of the foundations ...') disguises the fact that his monastic education endowed him with the means of placing Northumbrian churches within a sophisticated scriptural context.<sup>63</sup>

Therefore, Stephen and Bede may simply have been speaking to their peers, a minuscule elite within Northumbrian society, in a language which they could understand. On the other hand, early Anglo-Saxon monastic communities did not hold themselves entirely aloof from the secular world around them. Bede seems to have expected laypeople to be amongst the audience for his homilies on occasion;<sup>64</sup> Stephen's belief that Wilfrid's construction of magnificent churches had an effect on the wider community may not have been just pious rhetoric. We could therefore read the differences between Bede and Augustine's use of the story of the cleansing as reflective of the differences between their worlds. The bishop of Hippo engaged in a contemporary debate about how respect could best be shown to the martyrs; his analogy with selling items for sacrifice hints at the fact that some people would have defended as necessary for right worship the activities which Augustine labelled drunkenness in the holy places.<sup>65</sup> Augustine's interest was not primarily the consecrated nature of the church-building, but rather appropriate ways of expressing piety. No such debate over practice existed in early eighth-century Northumbria – no local traditions of devotional laughter or pious gossiping appear in the sources! Bede sought to expel mundane actions, (all too) human forms of behaviour, from church, which by implication was an

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<sup>62</sup> *The Ruin*, ed. and trans. R. Hamer, *A Choice of Anglo-Saxon Verse* (London, 1970), pp. 25–9; T. Pickles, 'Anglo-Saxon Monasteries as Sacred Places: Topography, Exegesis and Vocation', *Sacred Text – Sacred Space: Architectural, Spiritual and Literary Convergences in England and Wales*, ed. J. Sterrett and P. Thomas (Leiden, 2011), pp. 35–55.

<sup>63</sup> Stephen, *VW*, ch. XXII (ed. Colgrave, pp. 44–7): '... domum Domino in honorem sancti Andreae apostoli fabrefactam fundavit: cuius profunditatem in terra ... non est meae parvitas hoc sermone explicare'

<sup>64</sup> Walt, 'Homiliary of the Venerable Bede', pp. 56–8. Note also the presence of female bodies in the cemetery at Wearmouth – implying that the monastery provided pastoral functions for the laity: Rosemary Cramp (ed.), *Wearmouth and Jarrow: Monastic Sites*, 2 vols. (Swindon, 2005) I, 84.

<sup>65</sup> See p. 000 above.

extraordinary place. In a society where traditionally wooden buildings would have been abandoned on a frequent basis, the poor repair into which the church at York had fallen may have been less shocking than now it seems; consequently, Stephen's implicit assertion that a church could not be subject to the same temporal processes as other buildings may have been the more striking.<sup>66</sup> These facts may indicate that the laity already afforded a degree of dignity to church buildings, with a consequent clerical response of raising the bar even higher in terms of what was demanded for such a holy site – taking it right out of the quotidian world.

Evidence from the wider Insular context suggests that the early Irish influence on Northumbrian Christianity could go some way towards explaining such attitudes. The writers of the *Collectio canonum Hibernensis* (probably at work during the early eighth century on Iona) explicitly urged enclosure of religious houses on the model of the temple-precincts, with the church at the heart of the complex as the site of the greatest holiness and therefore requiring the most purity.<sup>67</sup> It has recently been suggested that Irish monasteries mimicked the temple's structure in their physical plans; but even if this were not the case the temple-image could still have provided a powerful means of thinking about a holy site.<sup>68</sup> One of the reasons given for Columbanus' exile from Burgundy was that he refused King Theuderic access to the sanctuary or inner enclosure of the monastery – an action which would make sense if the Irish monk had thought in terms of the temple-complex, the inner shrine of which only priests could enter. Theuderic had believed that his patronage of a monastery gave him a

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<sup>66</sup> See H. Hamerow, *Rural Settlements and Society in Anglo-Saxon England* (Oxford, 2012), pp. 32–7.

<sup>67</sup> *Collectio canonum hibernensis* xlv, ed. H. Wasserschleben, *Die irische kanonensammlung* (Leipzig, 1885), pp. 174–9. For the date and origin of the *Collectio*: R. Flechner, 'A Study and Edition of the *Collectio canonum Hibernensis*' (unpubl. DPhil thesis, Oxford Univ., 2006), pp. 9\*–17\*.

<sup>68</sup> D. H. Jenkins, 'Holy, Holier, Holiest': *The Sacred Topography of the Early Medieval Irish Church* (Turnhout, 2010).

right to go where he wished as was the local custom.<sup>69</sup> There had been efforts in Frankia before this to limit lay access to the sanctuary but, nonetheless, the Columbanian circle does seem to have inspired a noticeable hardening in attitudes in denying the laity entrance to sacred spaces.<sup>70</sup>

The evidence of these Irish sources shows that it was not only Roman-leaning clerics building in stone who might see holy sites as separate from the world around them. The effect of construction in stone on the Anglo-Saxon imagination is undoubtedly one factor behind Stephen and Bede's attitudes to churches, but they probably grasped for the temple-image to explain the church's dignity because ecclesiastical rituals and liturgy had primed them to do so. The homilies in which Bede played with the relationship between the temple, the church-building and the congregation were for the celebration of *encaenia*, the annual commemoration of a church's dedication whose name comes from the festival of the temple-rededication under the Maccabees.<sup>71</sup> This reminds us that the liturgy of the Church constantly drew upon the similarities between church-buildings and the Jewish temple, especially within the context of church-dedication.<sup>72</sup> Aldhelm's poems commemorating the dedications of various churches often use the word *templum* to describe the building, a not uncommon choice in a poetic context as Æthelwulf also shows.<sup>73</sup> If Anglo-Saxon dedication rites had been influenced by Pope Gregory's suggestion that pagan shrines be consecrated to Christian

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<sup>69</sup> Jonas, *Vita Columbani* i. 19, ed. B. Krusch, MGH Scriptores rerum Germanicarum in usum scholarum 37 (Hanover, 1905), 190. While in general Jonas's account of this part of Columbanus' life should be approached with caution, T. M. Charles-Edwards argues that this story concerning Theuderic's entrance to the inner parts of the monastery is accurate: *Early Christian Ireland* (Cambridge, 2000), pp. 358–9.

<sup>70</sup> B. H. Rosenwein, 'Inaccessible Cloisters: Gregory of Tours and Episcopal Exemption', *The World of Gregory of Tours*, ed. K. Mitchell and I. N. Wood (Leiden, 2002), pp. 181–97, esp. 185; S. Woods, *The Proprietary Church in the Medieval West* (Oxford, 2006), p. 120.

<sup>71</sup> Iogna-Prat, *Maison Dieu*, pp. 292–4; *Hom.* ii. 24 (ed. Hurst, p. 358). See John X.22.

<sup>72</sup> B. Repsher, *The Rite of Church Dedication in the Early Medieval Era* (Lampeter, 1998), esp. pp. 27–33; Gittos, *Sacred Places*, pp. 212–45 and 276. See the use of temple-language in the Gelasian Sacramentary: *Liber sacramentorum Romanae ecclesiae ordinis anni circuli*, ed. L. C. Mohlberg, L. Eizenhöfer and P. Siffrin (Rome, 1960), lxxxviii–lxxxviii, pp. 109–11.

<sup>73</sup> Aldhelm, *Carmina ecclesiastica* i–iii, ed. R. Ehwald, MGH Auct. Antiq. 15 (Berlin, 1919), 11–18; Æthelwulf, *De abbatibus* vi lines 143–50, xiv lines 446–7 and xx lines 620–40, ed. A. Campbell (Oxford, 1967), pp. 13–15, 37 and 51.

use according to the model of the Jewish feast of tabernacles (with which the Maccabean rededication of the temple was associated), then the link between Christian church and Jewish temple may have seemed all the more obvious.<sup>74</sup> But Gregory's letter does also suggest that Anglo-Saxon clerics may have tried to appropriate some of the power associated with pagan holy sites for their own churches and this might seem a more plausible explanation for lay respect for church-buildings in eighth-century Northumbria.<sup>75</sup>

Both Gregory and Bede seem to have accepted that pre-Christian Anglo-Saxons had shrines which contained idols and into which normal worldly things like weapons could not be taken – implying perhaps a sacred precinct to be kept pure.<sup>76</sup> Religious buildings may indeed have been part of native polytheism, though recent work has shown that these buildings probably reflect the influence of Christianity before outright conversion.<sup>77</sup> The possibility of there being a clear pre-Christian influence on the Anglo-Saxon Church's attitudes to ritual purity has not been proven. Augustine of Canterbury's letters to Pope Gregory displayed a concern for ritual purity in questions about when one could enter a church or receive communion. However, these probably reflect not pagan taboos, but rather the influence of Insular forms of Christianity since British and Irish ecclesiastical sources reveal the very same issues concerning purity.<sup>78</sup> On the whole, Gregory's responses rejected any excessive concern with

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<sup>74</sup> Bede, *HE* i. 30 (ed. Colgrave and Mynors, pp. 106–8). M. A. Fraser, 'The feast of the Encaenia in the fourth century and in the ancient liturgical sources of Jerusalem' (unpubl. PhD. thesis, Durham Univ., 1996), p. 233; F. Spiegel, 'The *tabernacula* of Gregory the Great and the conversion of Anglo-Saxon England', *ASE* 36 (2007), 1–13.

<sup>75</sup> Actual evidence of continued use of pagan shrines as churches is almost entirely non-existent: D. Wilson, *Anglo-Saxon Paganism* (London, 1992), pp. 44–7.

<sup>76</sup> Bede, *HE* i. 30 and ii. 13 (ed. Colgrave and Mynors, pp. 106–8 and pp. 184–6). Bede seems to have preferred the use of the word *fanum* to refer to pagan shrines, but he did also use *templum* on occasion: J. Barrow, 'How Coifi Pierced Christ's Side: A Re-Examination of Bede's *Ecclesiastical History* II, Chapter 13', *JEH* 62 (2011), 693–706, at 703; I. N. Wood, 'Some Historical Re-identifications and the Christianization of Kent', *Christianizing Peoples and Converting Individuals*, ed. G. Armstrong and I. N. Wood (Turnhout, 2000), pp. 27–35, at 28.

<sup>77</sup> J. Blair, 'Anglo-Saxon Pagan Shrines and their Prototypes', *ASSAH* 8 (1995), 1–28; Wood, 'Some Historical Re-identifications', pp. 28–31. I hope to explore the question of the link between Anglo-Saxon church-buildings and pagan holy sites in more detail elsewhere.

<sup>78</sup> R. Meens, 'A Background to Augustine's Mission to the Anglo-Saxons', *ASE* 23 (1994), 5–17.

bodily purity – but, nonetheless, they did not display an entirely neutral attitude to the church-space.<sup>79</sup>

Menstruation, childbirth and nocturnal emissions (the main ‘defilements’ Augustine asked Gregory to consider) did not involve a sinful will, the pope claimed, and therefore were not reasons sufficient to bar anyone from a church.<sup>80</sup> Nonetheless, even sex within marriage usually involved some aspect of lust and thus married individuals ought to wash and allow some time to pass before entering church to receive the eucharist: Gregory explicitly described this as the practice in Rome.<sup>81</sup> Bede’s analysis of the cleansing of the temple was rather similar. Note that he condemned laughter and gossiping in a church because those acts were ipso facto sinful. Just as Gregory pointed out that even ‘lawful intercourse cannot take place without fleshly desire’, Bede argued that ‘the pursuit of greed or deceit is generally characteristic of the action of those engaged in commerce’, suggesting that even trade involving goods necessary for religious ends such as the materials for sacrifice in the temple inextricably incorporated greed, and so must be banished from a holy place.<sup>82</sup> Northumbrian evidence suggests that ritual purity in relation to the eucharist continued to be a live issue into the early eighth century.

The *Vita Gregorii* written at Whitby between 704 and 714 describes the pope as withholding the eucharist from a woman who doubted the reality of its transformation into Christ’s body and blood – indicating the importance attached to the eucharist as sacrifice in Northumbria at

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<sup>79</sup> R. Meens, ‘Ritual Purity and the Influence of Gregory the Great in the Early Middle Ages’, *Unity and Diversity in the Church*, ed. R. N. Swanson (Oxford, 1996), pp. 31–43, at 35.

<sup>80</sup> Bede, *HE* i. 27 (ed. Colgrave and Mynors, pp. 88–102).

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.* (ed. Colgrave and Mynors, p. 94).

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*: ‘licita ammixtio coniugis sine uoluntate carnis fieri non potest’; Bede, *Marc.* iii lines 1441–2 (ed. Hurst, p. 579): ‘studium auaritia siue fraudis quod proprium solet esse negotiantium facinus’. My translation for the latter. M. McCormick’s reading of Bede (based exclusively on *Hom.* ii. 1), that it was dishonest trading rather than trading *tout court* which had to be removed from the temple, does not convince me: *Origins of the European Economy* (Cambridge, 2001), p. 13. Bede seems rather to have thought that all commerce was in some way dishonest, even when legitimate, by virtue of its worldly nature

this time, and a consequently cautious attitude to access to it.<sup>83</sup> Bede's *Epistola ad Ecgbertum episcopum* of 734 shows that sexual abstinence was considered necessary to receive the sacrament in early eighth-century Northumbria; Bede wanted more laity to communicate regularly, including married couples 'provided they can demonstrate a measure of self-control and understand the virtue of being chaste'.<sup>84</sup> The fact that most of the laity, including those Bede considered sexually pure, avoided regular communion (something which he bemoaned in the letter) may imply that they thought the power of the sacrament too awesome to be taken lightly.<sup>85</sup> Elsewhere, Bede interpreted the Aaronic priesthood's need to wash before sacrifice in the tabernacle as an order for both the celebrant and recipient of the eucharist to 'fear death if they presume to go in to the sacred mysteries without the distinctive washing of compunction, or to handle the holy things of the Lord with hands that are unclean'.<sup>86</sup> Bede no doubt drew on Gregory's advice to Augustine here and both authors were concerned with two types of cleanliness: inner cleanliness brought about through tears, but also physical ritual cleanliness.<sup>87</sup> The need for clean hands led Bede to consider all sexual activity inappropriate for the Christian priesthood.<sup>88</sup> All these references suggest what the homiletic use of the temple-cleansing narrative makes clear, that the altar of the Christian

<sup>83</sup> *The Earliest Life of Gregory the Great, by an Anonymous Monk of Whitby*, ed. and trans. B. Colgrave (Lawrence, KA, 1968), pp. 104–9. For other examples of popes denying access to the eucharist: Stephen, *VW*, chs. XXXII and LX (ed. Colgrave, pp. 66 and 130).

<sup>84</sup> Bede, *Epistola ad Ecgbertum episcopum*, ch. 15, in *Abbots of Wearmouth and Jarrow: Bede's Homily i. 13 on Benedict Biscop; Bede's 'History of the Abbots of Wearmouth and Jarrow'; the Anonymous 'Life of Ceolfrith'; Bede's 'Letter to Ecgbert, Bishop of York'*, ed. and trans. C. Grocock and I. N. Wood (Oxford, 2013), p. 154: 'Ipsi etiam coniugati, si quis sibi mensuram continentiae ostendat et uirtutem castitatis insinuet ...' For lay reception of communion: S. Foot, *Monastic Life in Anglo-Saxon England, c. 600-900* (Cambridge, 2006), pp. 302–4.

<sup>85</sup> My thought on this subject has been stimulated by reading F. Knight, *The Nineteenth-Century Church and English Society* (Cambridge, 1995), pp. 53–6, on much later lay attitudes to the eucharist.

<sup>86</sup> Bede, *De tabernaculo* iii lines 1773–90, ed. D. Hurst, CCSL 119A (Turnhout, 1969), 138–9 – quotation at lines 1776–8 (ed. Hurst, p. 138): 'mors timenda est si qui ad sacrosancta mysteria absque speciali ablutione compunctionis intrare et sancta domini communibus manibus tractare praesumit'; trans. A. G. Holder, *Bede: On the Tabernacle* (Liverpool, 1994), pp. 161–2.

<sup>87</sup> Gregory interpreted Leviticus XV.16's instruction for a man to wash post-intercourse as an order to wash oneself physically, but he also interpreted it as meaning that sins should be washed away with tears: Bede, *HE* i. 27 (ed. Colgrave and Mynors, pp. 94 and 98).

<sup>88</sup> C. Cubitt, 'The clergy in early Anglo-Saxon England', *Hist. Research* 78 (2005), 273–87, at 284–5.

sacrifice, and consequently the church which contained it, had to be kept pure from the sinful world.

It thus seems clear that, while concerns about the purity of the holy places may have entered Anglo-Saxon Christianity from Irish or British sources, an arch-Romanist at Ripon or Jarrow could still have argued that his attitudes matched those of Gregory the Great. Indeed Gregory's letter to Augustine speaks of the Old Testament Law giving instructions about when to enter a *church* and when to not, the Vulgate text of Deuteronomy having collapsed the difference between the Jewish and Christian holy sites with its use of *ecclesia Domini* to describe the Jewish tabernacle.<sup>89</sup> Liturgical language, Irish attitudes to sacred space and native awe at stone buildings all no doubt contributed to the association of churches with the Jewish temple. But Stephen and Bede could also have claimed that when they linked Northumbrian churches with the Hebrew sacred building they were part of a tradition of respect for the eucharistic sacrifice which stretched right back to the initial Roman mission to the Anglo-Saxons.

It certainly stretched forward into the following centuries. Recent work has directed much attention to Carolingian attitudes to sacred places and buildings, and rightly so.<sup>90</sup> But here, as in so much else, the Carolingians very much worked in the shadow of Northumbria.<sup>91</sup> For example, Theodulf of Orleans has been portrayed as a key thinker who emphasized the holiness of church-buildings, seeing them as the successors of the Jewish sacred sites.

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<sup>89</sup> Bede, *HE* i. 27 (ed. Colgrave and Mynors, p. 94). See e.g. (Vulgate) Deuteronomy XXIII.1–3.

<sup>90</sup> Collins, *Carolingian Debate*; D. M. Polanichka, 'Precious Stones, Living Temples: Sacred Space in Carolingian Churches, 751–877 C.E.', (unpubl. PhD. dissertation, Univ. of California, Los Angeles, 2009). Iogna-Prat (*Maison Dieu* and 'Lieu de culte') has argued that Carolingian intellectuals continued to prioritise the Church community over the church-building – Carolingian exegesis emphasized the vision of the temple-Church built up from living stones ('Lieu de culte', p. 221).

<sup>91</sup> Collins, *Carolingian Debate*, pp. 15–17 and 48–9; Polanichka, 'Precious Stones', pp. 29–34 – both studies recognize the influence of Bede on Carolingian writers generally, but, believing that Bede himself rejected any sacred significance for church-buildings, see the Carolingians as going far beyond anything Bede would have intended.

Theodulf's episcopal statutes used the story of the cleansing of the temple to legislate for appropriate behaviour within a church and did so using the very ideas which Bede had set out in his homily on John II.12–22: 'For if the Lord cast out from the temple those who bought and sold the victims which were to be offered to himself, with how much greater anger will he cast out thence those who defile with lies, vain speaking, jokes, and trifles of this sort, the place set out for divine worship?' Indeed when put alongside the relevant extracts from Bede, it becomes clear that Theodulf in his statutes simply paraphrased the Anglo-Saxon.<sup>92</sup> If churches became increasingly seen as holy places, indeed as temples, during the Carolingian age, the evidence suggests that the process was already well under way in early eighth-century Northumbria.<sup>93</sup>

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<sup>92</sup> Theodulf of Orleans, *Capitula* i. 10, ed. P. Brommer, MGH Capitula Episcoporum 1 (Hannover, 1984), 110: 'Si enim dominus illos de templo eiecit, qui victimas, quae sibi offerentur, emebant vel vendebant, quanto magis illos iratus inde abiciat, qui mendaciis, vaniloquiis, risibus, et huiusmodi nugis locum divino cultui mancipatum foedant?'; trans. P.E. Dutton, *Carolingian Civilisation: A Reader*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn (Peterborough, 2004), p. 109. Compare with Bede, *Hom.* ii. 1 (ed. Hurst, p. 185). For evidence that Theodulf had access to some of Bede's homilies: P. Meyvaert and A. Davril, 'Théodulfe et Bède au Sujet des Blessures du Christ', *RB* 113 (2003), 71–9. Collins, *Carolingian Debate*, pp. 102–3, argues that Theodulf's opinion is close to that of the *Hibernensis*, but having previously starkly contrasted the *Hibernensis* and Bede (pp. 34–40) he fails to recognize Theodulf's debt to Bede.

<sup>93</sup> Elements of this paper were presented at the International Medieval Congress at Leeds and the 'Producing Christian Culture' conference at Durham, both in July 2013. My thanks to the participants at both sessions for their comments and especially to Sarah Foot for her exemplary supervision of the thesis of which this research is an off-shoot.